

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEA-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /136 W

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R 200700Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2040

INFO CINCPAC

CINCPACREP CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 6325

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AS, US

SUBJ: COMMENT BY PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ON U.S. MIDDLE
EAST MILITARY ALERT OF OCT 25

REF: A) CANBERRA 6080

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER AND LIBERAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SPOKESMAN ANDREW PEACOCK EXCHANGED STATEMENTS IN PARLIAMENT
NOV 20 ON WHITLAM'S REMARKS OF NOV. 8 ON U.S. MIDDLE EAST MILITARY
ALERT (REFTEL). PEACOCK SAID WHITLAM'S COMMENTS DID NOTHING TO
IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND IN EFFECT ATTACKED INTEGRITY OF
SECRETARY KISSINGER. IN REPLY PRIME MINISTER NOTED THAT
AUSTRALIA HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN ADVANCE NOTICE OF ALERT AND THAT
U.S. IS PARTISAN IN MIDDLE EAST IN CONTRAST TO AUSTRALIA. EMBASSY
WILL COMMENT FURTHER WHEN FULL TEXT IS AVAILABLE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES NOV 20 LIBERAL FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SPOKESMAN, ANDREW PEACOCK MADE STATEMENT ATTACKING WHITLAM FOREIGN
POLICY. HE REFERRED AMONG OTHER SUBJECTS TO PRIME MINISTER'S REMARK
AT HIS NATIONAL PRESS CLUB APPEARANCE NOV 8 THAT U.S. MIDDLE
EAST MILITARY ALERT HAD BEEN FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES.

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PRIME MINISTER RESPONDED, AND EXCHANGE ON NOV 20 SUBSTANTIALLY AS

FOLLOWS (WE WILL FORWARD TEXTS AS SOON AS AVAILABLE).

3. (PEACOCK): AUSTRALIA'S FOREIGN POLICY SHOULD SERVE THIS COUNTRY'S NATIONAL INTEREST, BUT THE GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT IN AUSTRALIA'S INTEREST.

PRIME MINISTER'S ANSWER AT PRESS CLUB NOV 8 TO QUESTION ON AMERICAN MILITARY BEING PUT ON ALERT SHOCKED A NUMBER OF AMERICAN EMBASSY DIPLOMATS IN THE AUDIENCE. HIS ANSWER WILL DO NOTHING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION. WITH THOSE REMARKS THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO ATTACKED THE INTEGRITY OF DR. KISSINGER - TANTAMOUNT TO CALLING DR. KISSINGER A LIAR. LAST MONTH THE PRIME MINISTER CRITICIZED THE U.S. FOR SENDING ARMS TO ISRAEL. SUCH CRITICISM CAUSED DR. KISSINGER TO WRITE TO THE PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINING THE TRUE POSITION. IT WAS A TEMPERATE LETTER, COUCHED IN DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE BUT SAID "DON'T CRITICIZE AT LEAST UNTIL YOU KNOW THE FACTS."

PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM OVER-REACTED TO CRITICISM.

4. (PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM): ABOUT THE U.S. ALERT - AT THE TIME I MADE THAT STATEMENT I HAD NOT STUDIED DR. KISSINGER'S STATEMENT - I HAVE SINCE STUDIED IT. THE FOLLOWING DAY I PRAISED DR. KISSINGER - I AM SECOND TO NO ONE IN THE WORLD TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF DR. KISSINGER. IT IS RELEVANT TO POINT OUT THAT THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS NOT AT THE TIME INFORMED OFFICIALLY BY THE USG ABOUT THE ALERT NOR WAS IT TOLD THAT IT APPLIED TO NORTHWEST CAPE. THIS THE MINISTER FOR DEFENSE WILL DISCUSS IN THE U.S. SHORTLY. WHILE THE U.S. IS A PARTISAN IN HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, ALL OF AMERICA'S ALLIES, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA, ARE NEUTRAL. AUSTRALIA SHOULD REMAIN NEUTRAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST - I HAVE DONE SO, MY GOVERNMENT HAS DONE SO AND I WOULD HAVE EXPECTED MORE SUPPORT FOR THIS TRADITIONAL STAND OF PREVIOUS AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS.

5. COMMENT: AFTER FIRST TWO DAYS OF CRITICISM AUSTRALIAN PRESS HAS CARRIED LITTLE COMMENT ON PRIME MINISTER'S REMARK OF NOVEMBER 8. ACCORDING TO SINGAPORE HIGH COMMISSIONER, PUNCH COOMARASWAMY, WHITLAM COMMENTED TO VISITING SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM NOV 15 THAT HE (WHITLAM) KNEW HE HAD BLUNDERED AS CONFIDENTIAL

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SOON AS WORDS WERE OUT OF HIS MOUTH. HOWEVER, WHITLAM ADDED HE HAD GOTTEN AWAY WITH IT SINCE PRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION HAD NOT PROFITED FROM HIS MISTAKE.

6. ON NOVEMBER 15 PROMINENT LIBERAL OPPOSITION LEADER, MALCOLM FRASER, WROTE TO AMBASSADOR TO EXPRESS HIS CONCERN OVER PRIME MINISTER'S REMARK THAT MILITARY ALERT HAD BEEN ORDERED FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRUPOSES. AMBASSADOR CALLED TO THANK FRASER

FOR HIS VIEWS AND GAVE HIM COPY OF SECRETARY'S OCT 25 PRESS
CONFERENCE REMARKS. FRASER SAID THAT HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO
ASK QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT BUT THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE
FOR PEACOCK TO RAISE MATTER. THIS IS WHAT PEACOCK HAS NOW DONE.

7. AS TO SUBSTANCE, WHILTAM'S REPLY TO QUESTION IS UNSATIS-
FACTORY, FAR LESS THAN SENATOR WILLESEE TOLD AMBASSADOR NOV 12
THAT PRIME MINISTER WAS PREPARED TO DO IN WAY OF CORRECTING
RECORD.

8. WE WILL HAVE FURTHER COMMENTS WHEN WE HAVE HAD FURTHER
OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY EXACT TEXT OF WHITLAM REMARKS ON THIS
OCCASION AND ANY FOLLOWUP WHICH MAY OCCUR IN WHITLAM PRESS
CONFERENCE LATER TODAY.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE OF ANY LETTER FROM DR.
KISSINGER TO PRIME MINISTER. WE ASSUME PEACOCK WAS MISINFORMED
AND WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMATION OR GUIDANCE SINCE
PRESS IS ALREADY SHOWING KEEN INTEREST.
GREEN

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